

Serial No.: 09/857,650
Amendment & Response

Attorney Docket No.: 18872.0105

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions of the claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

~~Claim 1~~ (currently amended): A method of drying a lactulose solution, comprising introducing the solution into a vacuum chamber at elevated temperature and at reduced pressure so that the solution forms a foam;
drying the foam under reduced pressure; and
optionally, ~~milling or grinding or breaking the dried foam into powder~~ subjecting the dried foam to a process selected from the group consisting of milling, grinding, breaking and combinations thereof to form a powder.

B, Claim 2 (original): A method according to Claim 1 comprising extruding the solution through a nozzle so that the solution foams as it exits the nozzle.

✓ Claim 3 (previously amended): A method according to Claim 1, wherein the foam is dried at a temperature which is reduced over time.

Claim 4 (original): A method according to Claim 3 comprising passing the foam through a plurality of drying zones, each zone being at a different temperature, the temperature of the zones reducing from one zone to the next.

Claim 5 (original): A method according to Claim 4 comprising passing the foam through a first zone at a temperature of at least 100°C and passing the foam through a final zone at a temperature of 50°C or less.

Claim 6 (previously amended): A method according to Claim 1 wherein the foam is dried at a temperature which increases and then decreases.

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Claim 7 (previously amended): A method according to Claim 1 comprising passing the foam through a first zone at a temperature of about 110-130°C for a period of about 8-15 minutes, passing the foam through a second zone at a temperature of about 70-90°C for a period of about 8-15 minutes and passing the foam through a third zone at a temperature of about 20-40°C for about 8-15 minutes.

Claim 8 (previously amended): A method according to Claim 1, wherein the pressure in the vacuum chamber is maintained below 50mbar.

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Claim 9 (previously amended): A method according to Claim 1, wherein the drying is carried out in a belt dryer within the vacuum chamber and the method comprises evenly distributing the solution over the belt of the dryer.

Claim 10 (currently amended): A method of drying a lactulose solution comprising subjecting the solution to conditions of raised temperature and reduced pressure so that the solution expands into a foam, and drying the foam ~~thereby produced~~.

Claim 11 (original): A method according to claim 10 wherein the foam is obtained at a temperature of at least 100°C and a pressure no greater than 50mbar.

Claims 12-15 (withdrawn)

Claim 16 (canceled)

Claims 17-18 (withdrawn)

Claim 19 (canceled)